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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/626,210	07/24/2003	Benno Heigl	P03,0295	9672
26574	7590	12/21/2004	EXAMINER	
SCHIFF HARDIN, LLP PATENT DEPARTMENT 6600 SEARS TOWER CHICAGO, IL 60606-6473				ASSOUAD, PATRICK J
		ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER
		2857		

DATE MAILED: 12/21/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/626,210	HEIGL ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Patrick J. Assouad	2857	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 2 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 July 2003.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*; 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-18 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) _____ is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) 1-18 is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on 24 July 2003 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>6/21/04</u> .	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

1. Claims 1 and 18 (and by dependence, claims 2-17) are objected to because of the following informalities: in claim 1, step (c), line 3, and claim 18, line 5, we see "plan" which should be -- plane --; and also in claim 18, the reference to "the vessel" in line 5 lacks proper antecedent basis. Applicant is *strongly* encouraged to include -- preferably in the preamble of claim 18 -- similar language seen in the preamble (i.e. "processing a volume dataset that represents at least one tubular vessel and an environment of the vessel...") of independent claim 1 to provide proper antecedent basis. Appropriate correction is required.

Allowable Subject Matter

2. Claims 1-18 are allowable over the prior art of record. The closest prior art of record is **Knoplioch et al.** (US 6,829,379 B1) of GE Medical Systems. We see in their Abstract:

One embodiment of the present invention is a method for analyzing tubular structures in a patient, including steps of: selecting a region of interest and a location within the region of interest from a displayed tube-shaped tree representative of a tubular structure in a patient; identifying a centerline of a structure within the tube-shaped tree within the region of interest; and displaying one or more views of the region of interest. The view or views are selected from at least a segmented 3-D view having the region of interest identified, a curved view of the selected branch, a reformatted view dependent upon the identified centerline, and a 3-D view dependent upon the identified centerline.

3. However, the prior art of record, including **Knoplioch et al.** fails to suggest or disclose the claimed combination of method steps of independent claims 1 and 18, most notably the claimed "electronically determining for each of said slice planes, a sectional area enclosed by the vessel in the respective slice plan[e]; [and] electronically determining the slice plane, among said multiple slice planes, wherein the sectional area is a minimum; and... electronically determining a working slice plane based on the slice plane containing the minimum sectional area."

4. As allowable subject matter has been indicated, applicant's reply must either comply with all formal requirements or specifically traverse each requirement not complied with. See 37 CFR 1.111(b) and MPEP § 707.07(a).

Conclusion

5. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. See the attached PTO-892, and most notable are the references from the IEEE database.

6. This application is in condition for allowance except for the following formal matters:

See above.

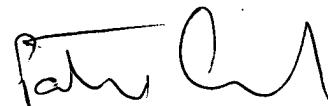
Prosecution on the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

A shortened statutory period for reply to this action is set to expire **TWO MONTHS** from the mailing date of this letter.

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Patrick J. Assouad whose telephone number is 571-272-2210. The examiner can normally be reached on Tuesday-Friday, 6:30am-5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Marc Hoff can be reached on 571-272-2216. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Patrick J Assouad
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2857

pja